

## Executive Summary

The Childcare Needs Assessment Survey was administered to the LANL workforce and to the community (Los Alamos County) at large. Over 1500 surveys were returned. The broad intent of the survey was to assess current opinions with respect to childcare needs in the community. In addition, the survey instrument was designed to gather information as to both the current and expected usage of child care provider services. Findings can be summarized under four broad categories:

**LANL/Work related:** 87% of all respondents believe that LANL should be involved in addressing childcare needs. 73% of the respondents believe that childcare arrangements have affected productivity at work. Survey results indicate that many respondents have considerable interest in a variety of “alternative” childcare hours (e.g., Before 7am, After 6pm, Emergency Care).

**Usage (current and preferred):** survey results indicate that 43% of the respondents (with children) are currently looking for childcare. With respect to the **location** of childcare facilities, there appears to be a reasonable close correspondence between current and preferred location. There is a slight indication that some respondents currently utilizing childcare outside of LA/White Rock would prefer a LA/White Rock solution.

About a third of the respondents with children report **delays** in obtaining placement in a childcare facility. Respondents indicate that the usage of childcare centers varies by child group, with 47% of all preschooler child care hours being accounted for by licensed childcare centers. The corresponding numbers for infants and toddlers being 14% and 30%, respectively. Respondent **preferences for various child care options also varied by child group**. “Care by my partner/self” is preferred by those respondents with infants (48%), while for those with preschoolers, a “Childcare Center” is the preferred option (45%). Respondents indicated that their current and preferred mode of dealing with **mildly ill** children is to “Stay home”.

**Satisfaction (with providers):** Overall, respondents rate commercial providers in a neutral manner. With respect to various specific childcare arrangement issues, respondents expressed the most **satisfaction** with “Health and safety practices”, “Quality of childcare staff”, and the “Physical Environment”. Respondents were relatively **dissatisfied** with “Cost comparable to the amount I am able to pay” and “Responsiveness to the needs of working parents”.

**Comments: 79% of all respondents** provided at least one written comment. We have provided all comments. A potentially useful endeavor would be to categorize comments in various categories (similar to Burud '95 study). This information is potentially useful in identifying common themes (both positive and negative). In their current format, it is difficult to distill much meaning from the voluminous amount of information provided by respondent comments.

## **Background**

The Los Alamos National Laboratory workforce and Los Alamos County residents were offered an opportunity to respond to a Childcare Needs Assessment Survey administered last fall. Respondents were encouraged to respond via a WEB interface. Paper copies of the survey were available upon request.

The survey itself, with LANL sponsorship, was initiated by the LANL Women's Working Group with support from HR Division, Diversity Office, DOE, and child care providers from the county of Los Alamos. The broad intent of the survey was to assess current opinions with respect to childcare needs in the community. In addition, the survey instrument was designed to gather information as to both the current and expected usage of child care provider services.

## **Distribution of Survey**

Although sponsored by LANL, the survey committee believed that it was important to assess the opinions of non-LANL members of the community as well. An understanding of child care needs and potential solutions necessitates a polling of opinions of the entire community. Any attempt to gauge current/expected usage of child care providers is likely to be more useful if non-LANL households are considered along with LANL affiliated households. To help ensure that current and/or potential usage statistics were not inflated, potential respondents were asked to reply to the survey only once per household.

On August 6, 1999, the Los Alamos Diversity Office, Women's Diversity Working Group, and the local Los Alamos day care providers released the 1999 Child Care Needs Assessment Survey. This announcement of the survey was in the form of a flyer, included in the local utility bills, mainly targeting the White Rock residents (copy of flyer is provided at the end of this report). A follow up reminder was a text message included on the Los Alamos utility bills a month later. A press release was prepared by Los Alamos National Laboratory Public Affairs Office. Laboratory Director, John Browne, issued an "All Employee's Memo", encouraging all employees to participate in the survey, either electronically (<http://pearl1.lanl.gov/childsurvey/online>) or by hard copy, available from the LANL Community Relations Office, or from local businesses. (Survey distribution points are listed at the end of this report).

## **Response Rates/Data Collection**

For most items, a response rate is provided. In some instances the response rates are likely to be conservative (underestimates). A glitch in the WEB application resulted in a default "Yes" answer being accepted, unless the respondent overtly entered a different answer. Since most items are analyzed on the basis of individuals selecting "Yes" for Item 6, item level response rates may be underestimated.

A more general question has to do with the validity of the results, given the above glitch. Fortunately, the survey required respondents to be rather active participants. Participants were required to enter counts, hours, and comments. It was not a survey that lent itself to a passive approach. It seems unlikely that many respondents logged in and immediately submitted the survey without truly responding to the items. The huge number of comments suggests that most respondents were motivated to take an active role in completing the survey.

## **Comments**

There are a voluminous number of comments. Resource limitations prohibit any attempt to categorize this abundant source of information. The survey afforded participants six different opportunities to “explain” or “comment”. Of the 1537 respondents, 1215 (79%) wrote something in at least one of the six “comment” sections of the survey. This degree of participation would be regarded by most as an indicator that the topic of child care is viewed as an important subject by the participants.

## **Results**

Results from the survey are described below. Generally, the analysis and discussion move sequentially in the order of items asked on the actual survey. Most items have a Table associated with a short narrative describing the results. The convention used here is to reference the Item number as the Table name. For example, Item 1 from the survey is referenced as Table 1. The actual text stem of the item is printed at the bottom of each Table. It is helpful in reading this report to have a copy of the survey in hand. Comments are voluminous. Accordingly, all comments are attached as single PDF files. The comment files are named as “C15”, etc, where **C15** indicates that the file is for all comments associated with **Item 15**. As with all Tables, the Item number referencing the appropriate item serves as the Table heading. Specific comments identifying providers by name have been edited (replaced by \_\_\_\_).

Typically, the analysis is conducted at the respondent level (e.g., number of respondents answering a particular item with a specific response). Occasionally, the unit of analysis is children (number of) or hours (e.g., hours child spends in a specific type of care). The unit of analysis is indicated at the bottom of each Table.

## **Designated Respondent Check**

The intent of this item was to serve as a reminder that only one survey per household should be returned. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents (1360/1537) affirmed that they would be the designated respondent for their household. Roughly 2% answered “No” to this item, indicating that they had not checked with their spouse. The remaining 10% did not answer this item. We include all responses from the survey in the analysis, as it does not appear that substantive conclusions from the following analysis are affected by the response to this particular item.

**Item 1:** Which employer category best describes where you work?

**Table 1** provides broad groupings of respondent/spouse employer combinations. 79% of all responding households reported a LANL affiliation (either respondent or spouse).

**Item 2:** In which geographical area do you reside?

**Table 2** provides the distribution of respondent residences. Even though the survey target population was broader than LANL UC, the patterns presented here seem to suggest that the respondent residence distribution is fairly representative of what one might expect based on the LANL UC population alone. Santa Fe is perhaps a bit under-represented, while Los Alamos is somewhat over-represented. Most likely these “differences” are to be expected, as the survey targeted the entire Los Alamos community (LANL UC, contractors, and non-LANL affiliated). There may also be some differential interest in the topic per children/location correlations (e.g, perhaps Santa Fe residences less likely to have children and/or be interested in Los Alamos county child care issues).

**Item 3:** Do you believe LANL should be involved in addressing childcare needs?

**Table 3** indicates that approximately 87% of the respondents believe that LANL should be involved in addressing childcare needs. Comments associated with responses to this item are listed in comment file **C3** (102 pages).

**Item 4:** Do your own or your own co-workers difficulties with childcare arrangements ever affect your productivity at work?

**Table 4** indicates that approximately 73% of the respondents believe that childcare arrangement concerns have affected productivity at work. Comments associated with responses to this item are listed in comment file **C4** (89 pages).

**Item 5:** Do you have or are you expecting children?

**Table 5** indicates that approximately 74% of respondents either have or are expecting children.

**NOTE:** survey items 6 through 21 query respondents about current and preferred childcare arrangements. These items are nonsensical for respondents without (or not expecting) children. Respondents answering Item 5 with a “No” were instructed to skip to Item 22. **Accordingly, we include only those respondents answering with “Yes” or “No Answer” in the analysis of Items 6 through 21, inclusive.**

**Item 6:** Have difficulties with childcare arrangements affected your/your partner’s decision to return to work after your child was born?

**Table 6** suggests that 58% of the respondents indicated that difficulties with childcare arrangements affected a household decision to return to work. 39% of the respondents reported no such difficulties. Comments associated with responses to this item are listed in comment file **C6** (45 pages).

**Item 7:** Are you currently looking for childcare?

**Table 7** indicates that 43% of the respondents (with children) are currently looking for childcare. Fifty-four percent report that they are not currently looking.

**Item 8:** If you are parenting children under the age of 6, please indicate the number in each category (Infant, Toddler, Preschooler)?

Respondents were asked to categorize all children under six years of age as Infant, Toddler, or Preschooler. **Table 8** indicates that the majority of children under six are preschoolers (52%), with 28% being classified as toddlers and 20% as infant.

**Item 9:** In what geographical area is/are your child(ren) currently receiving care?  
In what geographical area would you prefer that your child(dren) receive care?  
Choose all that apply by indicating number of children in each current and preferred location.

Respondents were asked to indicate both their Current and Preferred location for receiving childcare. **Table 9** provides the distribution for both Current and Preferred by location. Generally, the percentage distributions by location are similar for both Current and Preferred. However, there is a slight shift from Current to Preferred for the Los Alamos and White Rock locations. Apparently, a small number of respondents currently utilizing childcare outside of LA/White Rock would prefer a LA/White Rock solution.

**Item 10:** What percentage of your total gross household income goes towards childcare? \_\_\_\_\_%

The open-ended nature of this respond resulted in a multitude of response formats/metrics. The data is not usable without some cleanup. Of the 1161 respondents having/expecting children, 39% did not respond to this item at all. The responses are listed in comment file **C10** (71 pages).

**Item 11:** How did you learn about your current childcare arrangements? \_\_\_\_\_

This item is open-ended. Responses are printed in comment file **C11** (68 pages).

**Item 12:** What primary barriers have you encountered in trying to successfully meet your childcare needs?

857 of 1161 (74%) respondents having/expecting children choose at least one of the listed choices or Other. Multiple selections were allowed. Accordingly, **Table 12** shows the distribution of the 1791 total circled choices for this item. High Cost is reported as a barrier by 67% of the respondents answering this item. Long waiting lists and insufficient training of providers are also indicated as barriers by 49% and 39% of respondents, respectively.

**Item 13:** At the time you last needed to place a child in care, which of the following

best describes your experience obtaining placement?

Approximately 60% of respondents having/expecting children reported no delays in securing a placement for their child (see **Table 13**). The remainder reported a wait of some sort, ranging from a month to a year. **Respondents indicating a wait serve as the respondent pool for the analysis of Items 14 and 15.**

**Item 14:** If you were on a waiting list, how many waiting lists were you on?

**Table 14** provides the distribution of respondents by length of wait (based on respondent indicating that they were on **at least one list** for the length of time in question).

**Item 15:** When you found care, did you remove your name from these lists?

**Table 15** indicates that roughly 66% of respondents who had placed their names on waiting lists (**Item 13**) removed their names from the list(s) after finding care. Some reasons for not removing names from list(s) provided by respondents are noted in comment file **C15** (8 pages).

**Item 16:** Describe your current childcare situation. Please list the number of children for each group.

60% (694/1161) of respondents having/expecting children answered this item. Column 2 (# of Children) in **Table 16** provides the distribution of children by group (e.g., 201 infants). For each child group, the number of hours (and corresponding percentage) allocated to each type of care is shown. For example, 50.21% of all infant care hours are accounted for in column A (“Care by spouse or family member”). In Column D, we can see that 14.03% of all infant care hours are provided by a “Licensed childcare center”. Moving across rows, the distribution pattern changes. For example, the percentage allocated to “Licensed childcare center” increases to 29.72% and 47.33% for the toddler and preschool child groups, respectively.

**Item 17:** Which category/ies best describe the childcare setting you **currently** use for your child(ren)?

52% (603/1161) of respondents having/expecting children answered this item. For children under six, **Table 17** indicates the distribution of care settings by child group. The predominant mode of care differs for each child group. “Care by my partner/self” is most common for the infant group (37.23%). For the toddler group, “Care by a family member” is the most common mode (33.43%), while for the preschooler group, “Childcare Center” is the most popular option.

**Item 18:** What childcare scheduling do you currently use while at work? (Check all that apply.)

43% (495/1161) of respondents having/expecting children answered this item. With respect to various child care settings, **Table 18** indicates that regardless of child group (infant, toddler, preschooler), the most common child care schedule (while at work) is “Full-time”.

**Item 19:** Which type of care setting would you prefer for your child(ren)?  
(Check all that apply.)

48% (563/1161) of respondents having/expecting children answered this item. With respect to a preferred child care setting, **Table 19** indicates that the preference depends upon the child group. “Care by my partner/self” is the preferred choice by those with infants (48.28%). For the Toddler group, “Care by my partner/self” and “Childcare Center” are equally popular preferences (38.63% and 35.38%). Finally, for those with preschoolers, “Childcare Center” is preferred by most (45.41%).

**Item 20:** What do you currently do when your child(ren) is/are mildly ill?  
(Check all that apply.)

67% (782/1161) of respondents having/expecting children answered this item. As shown in **Table 20**, a substantial majority of respondents (91.05%) indicate that either they or their spouse takes care of a mildly ill child.

**Item 21:** What services would you prefer to have available for your mildly ill child(ren)?  
Please rank order from 1-4 (with 1 being most preferred option).

88% of this respondent pool (1017/1161) answered this item completely (ranked all four choices). Unfortunately, the WEB application appears to have truncated the numeric rankings for the service options 3 and 4. Ranking data for these two options is not available. Despite the missing data, it is probably fair to say that the preferred mode of dealing with mildly ill children is to “Stay at home” (**Table 21**).

**Item 22:** Do you anticipate having children in the next couple of years? (If, no, unless you have other children under age six, please proceed to Question 28. Analysis for this item based on all respondents.

**Table 22** indicates that 34% of all survey respondents anticipate having children in the “next couple of years”.

**NOTE: The respondent dataset for the analysis of the remaining items (23 through 27) is limited to respondents who either:**

- a) did not answer Item 6 with a “no”
- OR
- b) answered Item 22 with a “yes”

**Item 23:** On a scale of 1-5, please rate your level of satisfaction with your current childcare arrangements. (5=very satisfied, 1=very dissatisfied).

This item provides a considerable amount of information. **Table 23** addresses the results for this item from three slightly different perspectives:

- a) Across all types of childcare arrangements, is there any overall tendency for satisfaction ratings to be differentially favorable/unfavorable for the three child groups (infant, toddler, and preschooler). The bottom row of **Table 23** (“Child Group Mean”) provides the overall mean ratings across all arrangement types. These three mean values (3.53, 3.44, 3.63) are equivalent from a statistical point of view. Hence, there is no evidence that satisfaction with childcare arrangements (overall) differs systematically between the three child groups.
- b) Across all three child groups, is there any overall tendency for satisfaction ratings to be differentially favorable/unfavorable for the eight child care arrangement topic. The last column in **Table 23** (“Arrangement Overall Mean Rating”) indicates that several statistically significant differences on the satisfaction rating scale were found. Ratings for each arrangement type are compared to the overall mean. If that overall difference is significant, the arrangement type is compared individually to each of the other arrangement types. The results are coded by letters (A,B,C,D) and are interpreted in the following manner:

Letters indicate significant differences in overall ratings by arrangement topic. Respondents express most satisfaction with A arrangements. B arrangements are the next most favorable but not quite as favorable as A. C and D arrangements are viewed relatively unfavorably, with the D arrangement being perceived significantly more unfavorably than all other arrangement types.

Thus, in terms of arrangement topics, respondents are most satisfied with “**Health and safety practices**”, “**Quality of childcare staff**” and the “**Physical Environment**”. Respondents are somewhat dissatisfied with “**Childcare hours compatible with work hours**”. Finally, relative to all other arrangement topics, respondents are most dissatisfied with “Cost comparable to the amount I am able to pay” and “**Responsiveness to needs of working parents**”.

- c) Within a given arrangement topic, was there any evidence of differential satisfaction between the three different child groups. There were only one finding indicative of differing levels of satisfaction by child group. For the “**Age-appropriate learning activities**” arrangement topic, respondents report greater satisfaction for the “Preschooler” group than for the “Infant” or “Toddler” groups.

**Item 24:** If you use a commercial provider (i.e., childcare center, home based provider), please rate your level of satisfaction of your current childcare arrangements from 1-5. (5=very satisfied).

Relatively few respondents provided a numeric rating (n=203). The mean rating was 2.56, just to the negative side of the neutral point (3). See **Table 24**.



**Item 25:** Please comment on the score from above that you have assigned to your commercial provider(s). Describe what you like, and provide constructive suggestions for what you would like to see improved.

Comments are provided in comment file **C25** (34 pages).

**Item 26:** Rank the following childcare quality indicators in order of importance to you. (1= most important; 8=least important).

**Table 26** provides the counts and average ranking for the four indicators for which data was available. Roughly 51% of this respondent pool answered this item. Unfortunately, the WEB application appears to have truncated the numeric rankings for indicators E through H. Ranking data for these quality indicators is not available. About the most one can say about this data is that “**Safety**” is likely the most important child care quality indicator.

**Item 27:** If childcare were available during “additional” or nonstandard hours, would you use childcare in any of the following timeslots? (Check all that apply)

The rightmost column of **Table 27** provides a clear indication that there is considerable interest among respondents in “alternative” childcare hours. The smallest percentage of respondents indicating an interest in a listed choice is nearly 15% (for Sunday).

**Item 28:** Additional Comments

Comment file **C28** (105 pages) lists all additional comments.

## Limitations

**A time frame of two weeks was allocated for this analysis.** To save time/resources in analyzing this survey, the following decisions were made in conducting the analysis.

- a) the various “Other” responses are not analyzed in detail, only as aggregate categories
- b) No data “logic” checks were performed (e.g., did respondent allocation of hours/children appear reasonable and/or consistent across items)
- c) Extreme outlier issues **were addressed** (e.g., one respondent allocated 168 hours of Childcare to every option in Item 16).
- d) Patterns/relationships among items were not examined (e.g., If respondent answered X on Item Y, how did that affect their response to Item Z?)
- e) Graphical displays to aid interpretation/understanding were not produced
- f) Comments were not categorized or used to enhance understanding to responses to other items
- g) The results of the 1995 Burud study might be useful in understanding the present study. No attempt is made to compare/contrast the results of the two studies.

## Survey Distribution Points

- Los Alamos National Laboratory - Community Relations Office
- Los Alamos County Government (flyers only)
- Los Alamos Public Schools
- Los Alamos Medical Center
- Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce
- Los Alamos National Bank (both White Rock and Los Alamos)
- Del Norte Bank
- Zia Credit Union
- UNM-LA
- ICF Kaiser
- Los Alamos Technical Associates
- Furr's Supermarket
- Smith's Supermarket
- McDonald's (both White Rock and Los Alamos)
- Metzger's Hardware (three stores)
- Aspen Primary Care
- TRK Management Services
- The Ark Child Development Center
- Little Forest Play School
- Sage Montessori Sage
- Family YMCA
- Mesa Public Library (both in White Rock and Los Alamos)
- Sombrillo Nursing and Rehabilitation Center
- Merrick and Associates
- Los Alamos Small Business Center
- United States Postal Service
- Department of Energy - Los Alamos Area Office

Survey was released August 6, 1999 and completed surveys were accepted through September 30, 1999.

***A number of individuals and organizations contributed to this effort, we hope that we haven't missed anyone...***

Laura Jones (EES)  
Laurie McNair (EES)  
Veronique Longmire (DV)  
Evelyn Martinez (DV)  
Karen Edwards (DV/HR)  
Aida Bilalbegovic (DV)  
Janie Enter (E)  
Sally Hoffman (DV/HR)  
Hedy Lindemuth (The Ark Child Development)  
Chris Sierk (Little Forest Play School)  
Eva Birnbaum (CST)  
Jeanne Robinson (CST)  
Joanna Casson (CST)  
Duncan McBranch (CST)  
Roger Johnston (CST)  
Paul Ginsparg (T)  
Blair Stephenson (HR)  
David Hayden (Sage Montessori)  
M.J. Byrne (DOE/LAAO)  
Wendee Brunish (EES)  
Rosie Vigil (DV)  
Don Bryson (DV/BUS)  
Linda Weeks (Family YMCA)  
Bill Wadt (DLDBAO/QIO)  
David Martinez (DOE/LAAO)  
Leroy Apodaca (CRO)  
Danny Pacheco (NMT/DV)  
Steve Sandoval (PA)  
Josh Smith (CIC)  
Tina Skinner (CIC)  
Carol Burns (CST)  
Mandy Fuehrer (NIS)  
Maria Rightley (X)  
Otis Peterson (CST)  
Laura Worl (NMT)  
Mary Ann Stroud (NMT)  
Los Alamos Stationers  
Barbara France (Los Alamos County Utilities)  
Gary Thompson (Cooperative Services Inc. - CSI)  
Liz Laemmle (Mesa Public Library)



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# **1999 Los Alamos County Child-Care Assessment**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

Where:

On line:

Hard copies can be obtained from:

Local employers, businesses, banks,  
and many places in Los Alamos!

Available:

August 5, 1999

Deadline for submitting

September 30, 1999

Please, submit only one survey per  
household.

### **Who is conducting this survey?**

The LANL Diversity Office, local child-care providers, and LANL's Women's Diversity Working Group (WDWG) have designed this survey. This team will also tabulate and evaluate the responses.

### **Why are we doing yet ANOTHER survey? Wasn't the Burud and Associates survey comprehensive and expensive enough?**

Yes, and no. While it provided us with valuable information, it did not include some essential information needed to move forward. In addition, the survey was conducted in late 1994 and may be out of date. Furthermore, with this major initiative, it is extremely important to include the community's voice, which was not included in the Burud and Associates survey.

### **I don't have children, so why should this survey concern me?**

While you may not currently have children, your productivity at work may be impacted by child-care arrangement difficulties of other coworkers. And, you might have children in the future. In either or both cases, your input is extremely valuable.

### **Ok, you've convinced me that I should complete the survey.**

#### **Where can I obtain a copy?**

The survey will be accessible by internet access. The address is: If you do not have access to the internet or do not feel comfortable in completing the survey on line, hard copies of the survey will be

available from many places in Los Alamos. Members of the LANL Diversity Office, local child-care providers, and WDWG will meet with many local employers to explain the survey and leave hard copies for their employees. In addition, below are listed a few major distribution points:

- LANL Community Relations Office
- Local Banks (i.e. LANB, Zia, Del Norte, etc.)
- Mesa Public Library (White Rock & Los Alamos)  
Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce
- Local Child Care Providers (i.e. The Ark, Little Forest Playschool, Sage Montessori, etc.)
- Los Alamos County Administrative Offices
- Los Alamos Public Schools Office
- PTLA Main Office
- JCNNM Main Office
- LATA
- Los Alamos Medical Center
- YMCA
- Benchmark
- Merrick Corporation

**What is the deadline for submission of the survey?**

September 30, 1999

**What happens after the survey is completed, data analyzed, and results published?**

The results of the survey will determine the next course of action. We are depending upon your input to guide us.